

city than by setting it on fire in a particular quarter, in which there was a celebrated painting of Protogenes, he chose rather to abandon the enterprise than hazard the destruction of what was, in his opinion, of the highest value.

On the whole, if we have not the same demonstrative evidence of the attainments of the Greeks in painting that we have of their eminence in sculpture, namely, the existing monuments of the art, we have every degree of presumptive evidence which the subject can admit to warrant an opinion of an equal degree of excellence. These arts require the same talents, their progress is influenced by the same moral causes, they owe their advancement to the same taste and genius; and it is impossible to suppose the one to have been successfully cultivated in any age or nation, while the other remained in a rude and imperfect state.\*

If any apology were necessary for the length of the preceding observations on the state of the arts in Greece, I would remark, that as it is the province of history to exhibit the character and genius of nations, so the national character of the Greeks was in nothing more signally displayed than in those branches of art to which I have called the reader's attention in this chapter. In tracing the mutual relation of moral and political causes, this peculiar genius of the Greeks will be found to have extended its influence to the revolutions of their states, and to their fate as a nation. Its advancement marked the decline of the severer morals and the fall of the martial spirit; for the fine arts cannot exist in splendor, but in a soil of luxury and of ease. The taste for these supplanted the appetite for national glory, and at length ignominiously supplanted the place of public virtue. The degenerate Greeks were consoled for the loss of their liberty by the flattering distinction of being the humanizers of their conquerors, the *magistri et arbitri elegantiarum* to the unpolished Romans.

\* For a most ample account of the ancient painters, sculptors, and architects, drawn from the writings of the Greek and Roman authors, the reader is referred to the learned work of *Junius de Pictura Veterum*, and the catalogue of artists subjoined to that work. See likewise a very ingenious and learned Dissertation on the Painting of the Ancients, by T. Cooper, Esq., in the third volume of *Mem. of the Lit. and Phil. Soc. of Manchester*.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Public games of Greece—Effects on character—Manners—Poetical composition anterior to prose—Homer—Hesiod—Archilochus—Terpander—Sappho—Pindar—Anacreon—The Greek epigram—The Greek comedy, distinguished into the old, the middle, and the new—Aristophanes—Menander—Greek tragedy—Æschylus—Euripides—Sophocles—Mode of dramatic representation—The ancient drama set to music—The Mimes and Pantomimes—Of the Greek historians—Herodotus—Thucydides—Xenophon—Polybius—Diodorus Siculus—Dionysius of Halicarnassus—Arrian—Plutarch.

UNDER the early part of the Grecian history we had occasion to treat of the origin, and somewhat of the nature, of the public games of Greece. Among all nations, in that period of society when war is not reduced to a science, but every battle is a multitude of single combats, we find those exercises in frequent use which tend to increase the bodily strength and activity. The Greeks, however, seem to have been the first who reduced the athletic exercises to a system, and considered them as an object of general attention and importance. The Panathenæan, and afterwards the Olympic, the Pythian, the Nemæan, and the Isthmian games, were under the sanction of the laws, and subject to the regulations laid down by the ablest statesmen and legislators. They were resorted to, not only by the citizens of all the states of Greece, but even by the neighboring nations. Thus not only was a spirit of union and good understanding kept up between the several states, which, in spite of their frequent dissensions and hostilities, made them always regard each other as countrymen, and unite cordially against a common enemy; but this partial intercourse which the games produced with the inhabitants of other countries, induced an acquaintance with their manners and genius, and contributed very early to polish away the rust of barbarism. In those games, therefore, we may see the cause of two opposite effects: that Greece, in the early period of her history, was distinguished for martial ardor and military prowess; and that in the latter ages, elegance, politeness, and refinement were her predominant characteristics.

This passion of the Greeks for shows and games, extremely laudable, and even beneficial, when confined within due bounds, was carried, at length, to a most blamable and pernicious excess. The victor, in the Olympic games, who had gained the first prize at running, wrestling, or driving a chariot, was crowned with higher honors than the general who had gained a decisive battle. His

praises were sung by the poets; he had statues, and even temples, dedicated to his name. Cicero remarks, that among the Greeks it was accounted more glorious to carry off the palm at the Olympic games, than among the Romans to have obtained the honors of a triumph.\* Of these nations, it was easy to foretell which was doomed to be the master, and which the slave.

The games of Greece were not exclusively appropriated to gymnastic and athletic exercises. Those immense assemblies were the resort, likewise, of the poets, the historians, the rhapsodists, and even the philosophers.

It is a singular fact, that in all nations there have been poets before there were writers in prose. The most ancient prose writers among the Greeks, of whom we have any mention, Pherecydes of Scyros, and Cadmus of Miletus, were posterior above 350 years to Homer. Of those poets who preceded Homer, some of whom are supposed to have been anterior to the Trojan war, as Linus and Orpheus, we have no remains. †

Homer, of whose birth both the place and the era are very uncertain, is, according to the most probable opinion, believed to have been a native of Ionia, and to have flourished 277 years after the taking of Troy; that is, 970 years before the birth of Christ. This illustrious man, the father of poetry, was, probably, a wandering minstrel, who earned his subsistence by strolling from one city to another, and frequenting public festivals and the tables of the great, where his music and verses procured him a welcome reception. Lycurgus, the Spartan lawgiver, is said to have been the first who brought from Ionia into Greece complete copies of the Iliad and Odyssey; which, however, were not arranged in the order in which we now see them, till 250 years afterwards, by Pisistratus, tyrant of Athens. The method which he took to collect those poems, by offering rewards to all who could recite, or produce in writing, any of the compositions of Homer, renders it probable that those poems had originally been composed in detached ballads, or rhapsodies. ‡ From these various recitations, which were carefully transcribed, Pisistratus caused certain learned men of his court to prepare what they considered the most perfect copies, and to methodize the whole into regular poems, as we

\* *Propè majus et gloriosius quam Romæ triumphasse.—Ac. Orat. pro Flacco.*

† Linus is feigned to have been the son of Apollo, and is said to have been the first lyric poet. Stobæus gives some verses under the name of Linus; but they are believed not to be authentic. The fragments published under the name of Orpheus, in the *Poeta minores Græci*, and other collections, are plainly supposititious, being entirely destitute of the air of remote antiquity. The poem of the Argonauts, which is attributed to him, is, on the authority of Stobæus and Suidas, the work of Onomacritus, who lived in the time of Pisistratus. See Suidæ Lex. sub voce *Orpheus*.

‡ A passage of Athenæus confirms this notion. He tells us that the rehearsers of detached ballads, or *ῥαψῳδοί*, were called *Ῥηψοδοί*.—*Ath. Deip.* l. xiv.

now find the Iliad and Odyssey. The division of each poem into twenty-four books is supposed to have been a later operation, as none of the classic authors quote Homer by books.

The poems of the Iliad and Odyssey were again revised by Callisthenes and Anaxarchus, at the command of Alexander the Great, who, it is well known, held them in the highest esteem. They were finally revised by the celebrated grammarian and critic, Aristarchus, by order of Ptolemy Philometor, and this last corrected copy is supposed to be the exemplar of all the subsequent editions. But the genuine merits of Homer are independent of all artificial arrangement. His profound knowledge of human nature—his masterly skill in the delineation of character—his extensive acquaintance with the manners, the arts, and attainments of those early ages—his command of the passions—his genius for the sublime, and the melody of his poetical numbers, have deservedly established his reputation as the greatest poet of antiquity. It has been justly remarked, that from the poems of Homer, as from the fountain of knowledge, the principal authors among the ancients have derived useful information in almost every department, moral, political and scientific.\*

Although the subjects of the Iliad and Odyssey appear of great amplitude and extent, the action of both poems is, in reality, comprehended within a very short space of time. The action of the Iliad does not occupy many days. The indignation of Achilles upon the insult received from Agamemnon, forms the subject of the poem. Achilles retires to his tent in deep resentment. His absence dispirits the Greeks, and gives fresh courage to the Trojans, who gain some considerable advantages, and are occupied in burning the Grecian fleet, when Patroclus comes forth, in the armor of his friend Achilles, to stimulate the valor of his countrymen. He is slain by the hand of Hector; an event which rouses Achilles from his sullen repose, who signally revenges the fate of his friend by the death of the magnanimous Hector. He then celebrates the obsequies of Patroclus, and delivers up to Priam, for a ransom, the body of his brave son. This is in brief the whole action of the Iliad.

The structure of the Odyssey, of which the principal action is included in a period of time equally short, is more various and artful than that of the Iliad. Ulysses had been absent many years from his country, after the taking of Troy. His death was supposed certain; and Penelope, harassed by the importunate addresses of many suitors, could no longer invent plausible pretexts for delaying her choice of a second husband. At this crisis, the

\* *Adjice Mæonidem; a quo ceu fonte perenni,  
Vatum Pieriis ora rigantur aquis.—Ovid.*

And not only the poets, but, as Longinus informs us, the historians and philosophers drew largely from his copious source.

action of the *Odyssey* commences. Telemachus, the son of Ulysses, goes to Greece to interrogate Nestor regarding the fate of his father; and during his absence, Ulysses, having left the island of Calypso, is thrown by a tempest on the island of the Phæacians, in the neighborhood of Ithaca. Here he recites his various adventures, and obtains assistance from the prince of the country, for the recovery of his native possessions, now occupied and pillaged by the insolent suitors of his queen. He arrives in Ithaca, discovers himself to his son, and takes jointly with him effectual measures to accomplish his revenge, and extirpate these presumptuous ravagers. The whole action of the poem is comprised in forty days. The moral of the *Iliad* is, that dissension among the chiefs of a country is generally fatal to the people; and that of the *Odyssey*, that prudence joined to courage and perseverance are sufficient to surmount the most powerful obstacles.

The authenticity of the historical facts recorded by Homer has been much controverted. Even the war of the Greeks against Troy, and its ultimate issue in the destruction of that city, have been altogether doubted; and there are writers, of some name, who deny that Troy was ever taken by the Greeks—nay, that any such city as Troy ever had an existence. To this notion some countenance is derived from the circumstance that no vestige of a city is now to be found in the place of its supposed situation. But the universal belief of antiquity, and constant reference of the best informed of the ancient writers to the general events of the Trojan war, and the facts connected with that belief in the authentic history of ancient Greece and Rome, seem to afford, at least, a much stronger presumption of veracity to the general opinion than to its contrary. Were it to be an established rule, that every thing should be retrenched from the annals of nations for which we have not the most complete and irrefragable evidence, the body of ancient history would suffer indeed a great abridgment.

As the Ionic was the native dialect of Homer, so it is that which he has chiefly employed, though not exclusively, availing himself occasionally of the Attic, the Doric, and the Æolic, as well as of the general license of the poetic. Hence that variety in the rhythm and melody of his composition, which never palls upon the ear; and hence, likewise, the happy coincidence of sound and sense, which seems in him to have been less the result of study and artifice, than of a musical ear, which instinctively prompted the most appropriate expression, to give the greatest possible effect to the thought or idea to be conveyed.

Besides the great works of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the ludicrous poem of the *Batrachomyomachia*, or Battle of the Frogs and Mice, has been generally ascribed to Homer; and likewise a pretty numerous collection of hymns in honor of Apollo, Mercury, Venus, and the other divinities of his country. Of all these, however, the authenticity is questionable; though they have been cited as

genuine by Thucydides, Lucian, Pausanias, and others among the ancient writers, and are in themselves of sufficient merit to give no discountenance to the common belief. The *Margites*, an undoubted work of Homer, of a comic nature, of which no remnant is preserved, is likewise cited by Aristotle and the ancient writers as a composition worthy of its author.

Contemporary with Homer, or but a few years posterior to him, was Hesiod; a poet who seems to be more indebted for any share of esteem which he holds with the moderns, to his remote antiquity, and to the praises he has received from ancient writers,\* than to any feeling of the real merit of his compositions. That Virgil highly esteemed Hesiod as a poet, is evident from the many imitations of the Greek author which occur in the first and second books of the *Georgics*: nor is it, perhaps, a rash supposition, that Virgil had conceived the entire idea of his didactic poem on Agriculture, from the *Works and Days* of Hesiod. In two passages of the *Eclogues*, Virgil alludes to Hesiod with encomium:

— et quis fuit alter  
 Descripsit radio totum qui gentibus orbem,  
 Tempora quæ messor, quæ curvus arator haberet? †—*Ecl.* iii.

And, as the highest compliment to his friend Gallus, after introducing him to Apollo and the Muses, he makes the Heliconian maids present him, by the hand of Linus, with the same pipe which they had formerly bestowed upon Hesiod, the *Ascræan* old man.

— hos tibi dant calamos en accipe, musæ  
 Ascræo quos ante seni; quibus ille solebat  
 Cantando rigidas deducere montibus ornos. ‡—*Ecl.* vi.

Of the authentic writings of Hesiod two entire works remain; the poem of *The Works and Days* and *The Theogony*. The poem of the *Works and Days*, *Ἔργα καὶ Ἡμερæ*, consists of two books: the first commences with the fables of Prometheus, Epimetheus, and Pandora, the Five Ages of the World, the Golden, Silver, Brazen, Heroic, and Iron Ages; the poet proceeds to give an ample encomium on virtue, enforced by the consideration of the temporal blessings with which its practice is attended, and the punishment which awaits vice even in this world; and he thence eloquently enlarges on the chief moral duties essential to the conduct of life. In the second book, the poet lays down a series of

\* Hesiodus—vir perelegantis ingenii. et mollissima dulcedine carminum memorabilis.—*Vell. Paterc.* lib. i.

† “And the other—he who first indicated the divisions of the earth into different nations and peoples, and taught the husbandman the seasons of harvest and seed-time.”

‡ “Take it, then—the Muses assign to you this pipe, formerly conferred by them on the *Ascræan* sage, with which he was wont to charm even the obdurate elms from their mountains.”

precepts in agriculture, and details the various occupations of the husbandman at the different seasons of the year; he thence digresses to the proper seasons for navigation; lays down judicious maxims for domestic life in the choice of a wife, friends, companions, &c.; and concludes with enforcing the duties of religion, and a strict regard to good morals, and a general purity of conduct.

The poem of *The Theogony* contains a genealogy of the greater and lesser deities and deified heroes of antiquity; with the mythology or fabulous history connected with the religion of ancient Greece. This poem is the original source from which all the subsequent Greek and Roman mythologists have derived their accounts of the birth, parentage, and exploits of the heathen divinities, and the details of those fables which supply the place of authentic history in those ages properly termed the Heroic.

About two centuries posterior to the age of Homer and of Hesiod, flourished Archilochus, the inventor of Iambic verse—a poet whose depravity of morals brought on him contempt and infamy during life; but whose works, after his death, divided, as we are told, the public estimation with those of Homer. Yet as these works were of the lyric kind, it is not possible they could admit of a degree of merit which could at all stand in competition with those noble pictures of life and manners which are delineated by that prince of poets. Some fragments of Archilochus are preserved by Athenæus, lib. xiv.; by Pausanias, lib. x.; and by Stobæus, serm. 123. Contemporary with Archilochus was Terpander, a native of Lesbos, who is celebrated no less for his lyrical compositions, than for his exquisite talents as a musician. Of his verses we have no remains.\* The two succeeding centuries were distinguished by nine lyric poets of great celebrity: Aleman and Stersichorus, of whom we have a few imperfect remains preserved by Athenæus, Stobæus, &c.; Sappho, of whom we have two beautiful odes; Alcæus, Simonides, Ibycus, and Bacchylides, of whom there remain considerable fragments in a mutilated state; and Pindar and Anacreon, of whom so much is preserved as to enable us to form a just estimate of their merits.

Pindar, in the judgment of the ancients, was esteemed the chief of all the lyric poets. We have of his composition four books of odes, or triumphal eulogies of the victors in the Olympic, Pythian, Nemæan, and Isthmian Games of Greece. It required a great power of poetical imagination to give variety and interest to a theme of so limited a nature, through a succession of no less than forty-five panegyrics; and without doubt the poet has displayed unbounded imagination, and the most excursive fancy. It is, how-

\* Plutarch informs us that Terpander was the inventor of those melodies or musical strains in which it was customary to recite the poetical compositions in the public games or contests for the palm of poetry; and that in particular he sung to strains of his own composition the poems of Homer, as well as his own.

ever, to be suspected that the high admiration expressed by any modern for the compositions of Pindar, has either in it a considerable tincture of affectation, or is the result of a blind assent to the opinion of Horace, and others of the ancient writers, who have extolled the Theban bard as beyond all reach of competition, or even imitation. The sober critics of antiquity, in judging of his merits, have not shown the same indiscriminating enthusiasm. Longinus confesses that Pindar, with all his sublimity, is apt to sink below mediocrity, and that his fire is sometimes altogether extinguished when we least expect it: and Aulus Gellius gives it as the general opinion, that the poetry of Pindar is florid and turgid to excess.\* Yet we can discern in him many striking figures, great energy of expression, and often the most harmonious numbers.

Anacreon is a great contrast to Pindar. His fancy, which has no great range, is employed only in suggesting familiar and luxurious pictures. He has no comprehension of the sublime of poetry, and little of the tender, delicate or ingenious in sentiment. He is a professed voluptuary, of loose and abandoned principles; and his compositions, though easy, graceful, and harmonious, are too immoral to find favor with the friends of virtue.

Of the Greek lyric poetry, if the epigram may be classed under that denomination, the collection called *Anthologia* has preserved a great many very beautiful specimens. With a few exceptions, they are free from that coarseness and obscenity which disgrace the compositions of the Roman epigrammatists, particularly Martial and Catullus. The *Anthologia* was compiled by a monk of the fourteenth century; but it consists almost entirely of ancient productions, and is altogether a valuable monument of the Greek literature and taste. The best of the modern epigrams may be traced up to that source, and the English and French poets have frequently plundered the *Anthologia* without the least acknowledgment.†

Considering the *Anthologia* as affording the best examples of this species of composition, we may thence observe that the ancients did not altogether annex the same meaning that we do to the term epigram; which we consider as always displaying a point or witticism, consisting of a single thought, briefly and brilliantly expressed. The ancients required likewise brevity and unity of thought, but they did not consider point or witticism as essential to epigram. Martial and Catullus are frequently witty:

\* Noct. Att., l. xvii. c. 10.

† It is no inconsiderable testimony to the merits of the Greek epigram, that the great moralist, Dr. Samuel Johnson, sought a relief from the pains attendant on his death-bed, in translating into English and Latin verse some of the best epigrams of the *Anthologia*.